

For  
Carole, Ariane and Marc  
gems in my life

In memory of  
Dilgo Kyentsey Rimpoche  
a true Master  
and  
Lyonpo Lam Penjor  
a true friend

# TIGER AND MONK

A HIMALAYAN FICTION

by

ERIK ALLGOEWER

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by  
Erik Allgoewer

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## **Main Characters:**

### **CATHOLIC CHURCH :**

**Padre Fulvio**

**Padre Emilio**

**Father Gregory**

**Father John**

**Brother Mac**

Jesuit priest, specialist in Tibetan buddhism

Secretary of the Company of Jesus

Superior, Jesuit School, Kalimpong/India

Jesuit monk, stationed in Bhutan

Jesuit monk, stationed in Bhutan

### **ENGLISH NATIONALS:**

**Timothy Wiscott**

**Archibald Wiscott**

**Rudyard Wiscott**

Diplomat working for UNDP in Bhutan

Tea planter in South India, uncle of T. Wiscott

Retired government official

### **FRENCH NATIONALS:**

**Professeur Virgil Machprot**

**Adèle de Sainte Fleure**

**Jean Dupont**

Tibetologist, head of department of INLCO

Tibetologist, member of INLCO

Attaché Culturel, French embassy Katmandu

### **CHINO & TIBETAN NATIONALS:**

**Rinchen Namgyal**

**Norbu Gyaltsen**

**Tobgyal Rimpoche**

Tibetan monk, mole of the Chinese Secret Service

Commander of Chino-Tibetan task force

**Tibetan Lama, head of  
Tang monastery**

### **INDIAN NATIONALS:**

**Lieutenant Ajit Singh**

**General “Kali”**

**Birandra Das**

Special Forces, Armed Forces of India

Head of Special Forces, AFI

Head of task force AFI (group of ‘mountaineers’)

### **BHUTANESE NATIONALS:**

**Druk Gyalpo**

**Commander Dorji Dukpa**

**Lyonpo Lam Dorji**

His Majesty, the King of Bhutan

Second in command of the ‘Tiger’ unit

Minister, member of the Royal Council

### **EXPATRIATES IN BHUTAN:**

**Hans Limonada**

**Doctor Lautinger**

Swiss forest engineer, living in Bumthang

Swiss doctor, working in the Bumthang-Hospital

## GLOSSARY:

<b>AFI</b>	Armed Forces of India
<b>Bagdogra</b>	Large city in Assam/India
<b>Bakhoo</b>	Traditional Bhutanese men's wear
<b>Bhutan</b>	Asian kingdom situated between India and Tibet
<b>Bumthang</b>	District capital in central Bhutan
<b>Chang</b>	Beer made from wheat or rice
<b>Choerten</b>	Buddhist religious monument
<b>Chowkidhar</b>	Housekeeper (Nepali language)
<b>Chu</b>	River
<b>Dalai-Lama</b>	Head of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism
<b>Dorji</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> meaning: Thunderbolt, ceremonial staff, symbol of wisdom
<b>Dorji</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> meaning: Common name in Bhutan and Tibet
<b>Druk Air</b>	<b>Bhutanese Airlines</b>
<b>Druk Gyalpo</b>	King of Bhutan
<b>Druk Yul</b>	Land of the Dragon = Bhutan
<b>Dzong</b>	Government and monastic fortress
<b>Dzongka</b>	Official national language of Bhutan
<b>Guru Rimpoche</b>	The second Buddha of our era (Tibetan name)
<b>I Ching</b>	'Book of Changes': Taoist scripture by Fu-Tsi
<b>Kalimpong</b>	Town in West Bengal/India
<b>Karmapa</b>	Head of the Karma-Kagyupa school of Buddhism
<b>Karsumpe</b>	Village in the Bumthang area
<b>Katta</b>	White ceremonial scarf
<b>Kira</b>	Traditional Bhutanese women's wear
<b>Kurje</b>	Holy place in Bumthang where Guru Rimpoche lived
<b>Là</b>	Mountain pass
<b>Lagkhang</b>	Buddhist monastery
<b>Lama</b>	Buddhist Monk
<b>Lord Jamba</b>	See Meitryea
<b>Mahayana</b>	Great Vehicle of Tibetan Buddhism
<b>Maitreya</b>	Buddha of the Future
<b>Padmashambava</b>	Same as Guru Rimpoche (Sanskrit name)
<b>Paro</b>	National airport in the western part of Bhutan
<b>RGB</b>	Royal Body Guards
<b>Rimpoche</b>	High ranking Buddhist monk
<b>Siliguri</b>	Town and Airport in West Bengal/India
<b>Stupa</b>	Buddhist religious monument (Sanskrit, 'choerten' in Tibetan)
<b>Suja</b>	Tibetan, salted butter tea
<b>Tang valley</b>	Valley in central Bhutan (north of Bumthang)
<b>Termas</b>	'Treasures' (scriptures or icons) hidden by Guru Rimpoche
<b>Thimpu</b>	Capital of Bhutan
<b>Tiger unit</b>	Special task force of the Royal Body Guards
<b>Tongsa</b>	District capital in central Bhutan
<b>Tsampa</b>	Roasted wheat flower
<b>Tumba</b>	Millet beer
<b>Ugenchoelling</b>	Village in the Tang valley
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>Vajrayana</b>	Tantric school of Tibetan school of Buddhism
<b>Wangdichoeling</b>	Village in the Bumthang area
<b>Wangdiphodrang</b>	Town in western Bhutan
<b>Yak</b>	Bovid living at high altitudes in the Himalaya
<b>Zau</b>	Puffed, sweet rice

## **CHAPTERS :**

Rumors	6 - 21
Approach	22 - 52
There	53 - 84
Search	85 – 121
Revelation	122 - 137

## RUMORS

### Rome

“Uncomfortable these chairs!” Padre Fulvio thought as he sat at the old wooden reading table. The officials of the Archivio Segreto Vaticano had definitely been most unhelpful in getting him the necessary clearance to study the old documents. Fortunately his superior shared his interest in these papers. Indeed the General of the Company of Jesus had taken a keen interest in the fantastic tale the young priest had brought back to Rome.

It took all the influence of The Company of Jesus to allow an ordinary Padre into this highly sensitive place, where the secrets of millennia are hidden. Only the highest authority of The Church, often but the Pope himself can clear these files for release. The unknown and hidden side of history is piled up here in the world’s most amazing concentration of mystery. Three months now that he was back from Lhasa. Three months in which he had patiently tried to find substance for the extravagant rumor brought to him by the Tibetan monk. Fulvio’s gaze wandered to the high window of the austere room through which the late afternoon sun brought but little warmth. The air was stuffy, smelling of ancient documents. He shuddered as his eyes scanned the rows of venerable old books: Two thousand years of bitter fighting, the Inquisition, the Renaissance, scientific achievements by men like Leonardo da Vinci, monographs of the papacy’s exodus to Avignon, the reports of the theologians appointed to refute the thesis of Luther, errors of kings and of rulers of the Church. All these events lived their shadow life in these vaults. Their release, centuries later, might still bring disorder and dispute to the world of today. Slowly Fulvio got up, crossed the black and white tiled marble floor and stopped at the librarian’s desk:

“Thank you for your help. These documents are really interesting. I will continue my studies tomorrow.”

“Excuse me, Padre, I am afraid you forgot to hand me back the thesis on the Chinese document.”

“Sorry, I must have mixed it with my own papers. Here we are.” No way to fool them, he thought as he handed the papers to the librarian.

“By the way, do you know whether the original text of the missive of the Ming Empress is available at all? It must have been written around 1650, let’s see... 1655 to be precise.”

“I wouldn’t know. But I can certainly inquire and tell you tomorrow.”

“I would appreciate your help. Just an idea out of curiosity.”

“See you tomorrow then.”

“Good afternoon, Padre,” the young man said blandly.

\* \* \*

“He wanted The Silk Letter of the Ming Empress?” Cardinal Enzino asked, an alarmed expression on his face. “How come he knows about its existence?”

“It is mentioned in the report of that missionary who worked in China, Monsignore. He translated the I Ching,” the young man volunteered.

“Then how come that this missionary, Dr Wentz is his name I think, heard about the Letter, since it was a secret missive?” the Cardinal thought aloud, “I wonder whether it was all that secret. The Chinese Imperial court used to be a place of intrigues. But it really is disturbing, that this missive should be arousing interest again.”

“But why?” the young priest burst out.

“Curiosity can be dangerous, young man,” the Cardinal smiled, “But you are a devote servant of the church, so I might as well tell you: the missive is buried deep in the Archives. It is beyond the halls of the Miscellania. It is in the Safe.”

“In the Safe, you say Monsignore?” the young priest said in awe.

“Right, in the very Safe, next to the Revelations of the Lady of Fatima, accessible only to His Holiness,” the Cardinal replied tersely. With a sign of his hand he dismissed the young librarian.

Before the door had closed Cardinal Enzino reached for his phone and dialed a number never committed to paper, yet never forgotten.

“Do not be disturbed!” said a deep voice when he had finished his report, “Things are as they should be. Everything will be taken care of by myself! Good night!”

\* \* \*

“I’m burning,” announced Padre Fulvio to his friend Padre Emilio, Secretary to the General of the Jesuits over scaloppini al limone. Mamma Antonella had worked a miracle behind her big wooden cooking range in the old Albergo dei Pini. After the heat of the city, Fulvio enjoyed the cool evening up in the hills. He slowly sipped the dark red Frascati, the wine grown in the Colli Albani.

“I now have a sound cross-reference to that mysterious missive of the Ming Empress, I told you about. At least I think I do,” he said.

“My dear Fulvio,” the secretary jovially put a limp hand on Padre Fulvio’s arm his dark eyes gleaming mockingly behind gold rimmed glasses, “isn’t that wishful thinking? This letter may well be a most secret document guarded in the most inaccessible of places in our Archivio Segreto. Yet we have known about its existence for centuries. Its content however has never been revealed to us,” he added thoughtfully. “Don’t forget that the whole trade between China and Europe at that period of history was controlled by our dear Portuguese brothers of the Company of Jesus, since they were the only foreigners allowed to build warehouses and settlements in Chinese harbors. It was they who ran the merchant ships and they were entrusted by the Empress to forward the letter to Rome. According to our accounts, it took five month for it to reach Rome. It was so heavily sealed in what seemed seven layers of silk that no “natural incident” could possibly allow our brothers to glimpse even a word of its content. The Imperial Court had of course given them an oral account of its content. It is said, that the Pope was very agitated for weeks after having read it.

“What was the official version of its content?” cut in the young priest, moving nervously on his chair.

“We were told, that the reigning Ming Family was deadly afraid to be overthrown by the rival Manchu Family,” padre Emilio replied. “The Manchu’s had been welded into a formidable force by their leader Nurhachu and were ready to usurp the power. In exchange for the permission to Christianize China, the Ming Empress hoped to receive guns for her troops from Rome. This reason was plausible to the Portuguese Jesuits. They were very well aware of the internecine fights at the Imperial court, having provoked some them. The prospect to Christianize such a huge country prompted them to forward the document without delay. As I said no “natural event” occurred revealing its content during the journey. When the Pope broke the seven seals and read the missive in the presence of our Portuguese brothers suspicions were aroused. Indeed the Pope’s face turned pale. For long minutes he was speechless. The audience ended and the Pope had not uttered a word. Later it was explained that his reaction was caused by the prospect of Christianizing China. But then why weren’t our brothers allowed to read the letter? This was treating the Portuguese harshly, since missionary work in that part of the world was entrusted to the Company of Jesus. The Pope’s reaction was duly reported and written down in our archives by Giovanni Paolo Oliva from Genova. He was our General at that period. The affront has never been forgotten by our

leaders throughout the centuries, because this letter remained one of the few documents that our Order was never allowed to consult.”

“But this shows that I am not at all daydreaming,” the young priest objected.

“Easy, easy,” the Secretary smiled, “first of all don’t forget your scaloppini, they are deliciously tender. Madre Antonella would never wait upon you again if you did not eat them. And don’t forget, so far we are dealing with rumors and speculations.”

“Well these rumors seemed serious enough for our Order to keep the memory about them alive during all these centuries,” Padre Fulvio replied as he turned to his plate again. “I am fairly sure, there are other reasons for our long-lasting interest than an old account of a mute Pope.”

No emotions showed on the face of the Secretary as he mustered the young man. The blue eyes of Fulvio met his gaze quietly. The full lips under a sharp roman nose smiled ever so slightly expecting the elder man to stop fencing.

But Padre Emilio did not give in, not yet! Fulvio could certainly be useful. He was one of them. But years of cautious maneuvers in the unaccounted-for history of the Holy See had taught him, never to expose himself or his Church. Looking at his companion, he replied:

“You are young, well trained in clerical and philosophical matters. Your account of what happened to you in Tibet is plausible. However no proof has turned up as to the allegations of the Tibetan monk who contacted you in Lhasa. Now that you have done your research here in Rome, I would be very interested to hear your conclusions.”

Fulvio realized that the elder priest would not give away information that easily. He volunteered:

“You are aware that during these last five years I have been studying old Tibetan texts. They have one point in common: all are about revelations. For instance the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the Bardo Thoedroel brought to the West by Dr. Evans Wantz in 1927, caused great interest. Nobody took it at its face value though. It was considered a purely esoteric, religious text with no evident implication for everyday life. Jung was the first to understand its importance for Western psychiatry. He also highlighted the cultural barriers of the West that kept us from grasping the deep truth in it. The way this book describes the passage from life to death was long thought of as purely symbolic. However recent medical research done in the USA indicates that people who were resuscitated from near death, go through very similar experiences as the steps described in the Bardo Thoedroel: they relate that at first they experience a sensation of being outside their body. They then pass through some kind of dark tunnel leading to a light where they find themselves in the presence of people they knew in their life and who had died before them. Finally, they experience an impression of very strong light engulfing them. These very same phenomena are related in detail in the Tibetan book. It even describes the further steps leading ultimately to a new rebirth. Could it be, that behind this kind of scriptures there is knowledge of far greater dimensions? Could it be that originally the teachings were clear and fully understood by the teachers and their pupils? Could it be that as time went by, this understanding faded leaving only the mystical shell to be transmitted from generation to generation? Maybe you are not convinced and never will be. But many highly respected scientists listen to the teachings of the East. In modern particle physics for instance, it is universally accepted that at infinitely small levels of matter, energy and time, particles can be created out of nothing and return into nothingness. The Quantum Theory in physics permits such speculations. In what respect are these laws different from the marvelous revelations of the Prajnaparamita Sutra? In its Heart Sutra it is indeed said: Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.”

Exhausted from his long speech the young priest leaned back and took a deep sip from his wine. He steadied himself for the satirical attacks that he was sure would come from the

secretary. As the silence drew out, the elder priest stared unseeingly over the valley spreading under them. It was the presence of Madre Antonella that brought them back to reality:

“They are all the same, these spiritual men! They come and ask for the best food and the best wine. They say that the wellbeing of my poor soul depends on it. I work my ass off, sorry Padre! And then they talk and talk and my wonderful food gets cold and dry in their plates, *che miseria!*”

“My excuses, dear Signora,” the secretary smiled, “As usual, you try to kill us with mountains of extraordinary food. I will soon come to believe that this is some plot thought out by the local chief of the Communist Party.”

“Oh come on, that old goat would never waste any food on the enemies of the people. He likes it too much himself.”

“In this case, will you please give my excuses to your respected husband for having suspected him of such a deed? Why don’t we make peace with Madre Antonella and ask her to serve us her *Semifreddo* with a little *Strega*. ?”

With a broad smile on her face, the *Padrona* sailed into the kitchen.

“Satisfying priests again,” her husband muttered as she put down the dishes.

“Shut up, *stupidino!* You shouldn’t speak like this about holy men. They are certainly doing more for our wellbeing than your comrades who never put their dirty feet into our place, but prefer to hang out at Luciano’s and stare all night long at the big ass and long legs of his daughter behind the counter.”

“*Va, va*, I was just joking,” he pleaded.

When she returned to the table, the two priests were deep into their conversation again:

“... I am not saying your ideas are wrong. You must realize however, that so far you have not come up with a single hard fact. How can you expect our Order to take any action on these grounds?” Padre Emilio objected.

“So that is it,” the young man thought, “He doesn’t want to risk anything. He is afraid of losing face. And yet he seems genuinely interested, even thrilled by what I have told him.”

“Since you seem to be so hesitant,” Padre Fulvio ploughed on, “I want to be more specific about the information the Tibetan Lama gave me: In the old scriptures it is said that the fourteenth Dalai Lama will be the last of his line. At that moment, they say, the Dharma – the Buddhist teaching - will go west. This will be a time of great changes and most probably a most critical time for mankind. As you know, the present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth of his lineage! He had to leave his country in 1959, after the Chinese crushed the Tibetan uprising of 1958 against the occupation. A very complicated ritual chooses the successor of a Dalai Lama. Under the conditions of exile, it cannot be carried out anymore. How could it be foreseen, centuries ago, that during the reign of the fourteenth Dalai Lama this would happen?”

“According to your Tibetan source, was this the information contained in the letter of the Ming Empress?” the secretary cut in.

“He wasn’t specific about the message. I don’t believe that it is the main information contained in the letter, since this prediction is fairly common knowledge among his people. He was hinting at a much bigger secret, which concerns humanity as a whole! Its difficult you know, to be sure with these people whether they cannot or do not want to tell you the truth. Anyway, the Tibetan monk avoided more specific questions. He simply told me enough to put me on the track of this document. Well that’s is the whole of my story. A strange coincidence though, that a simple monk in a deserted monastery in far away Tibet should know about the existence of an old message in the vaults of a secret archive in Rome.”

“So you believe that all the indications your Tibetan friend gave you point to this unique document we are speaking of?” the older man wondered.

“It must be, since I crosschecked all his information. I pursued many blind alleys. But yesterday I came up with some very astonishing facts while reading the work of this missionary, Dr. Evans Wantz. This man had an incredibly deep knowledge of old Chinese history. In his research he had stumbled over allusions regarding the secret missive of the Ming Empress to the Pope. He made an in-depth analysis of all the rumors concerning its content. Although he gives no definite conclusion about it, his theory is surprisingly similar to the message the Tibetan Lama conveyed to me. I feel that I am very close to the solution by now.”

Slowly the secretary lifted his head and looked into the eyes of the young priest: “This is also the conclusion of our respected General. He asked me to convey the following message to you: What you have come up with has consequences that even he cannot measure. Your search could put wheels into motion that might crush us all. He is answerable only to one man and this man has been informed about your research. He orders you to stop your inquiries and to take up your new work as a teacher in our missionary school in Rwanda. You will leave Rome by tomorrow evening.”

Suddenly Padre Fulvio did not feel the taste of the Semifreddo anymore. It was like sand grating down his dry throat.

“Amen,” he managed weakly.

\* \* \*

### **South India**

“Rain again! What a lousy period of the year this winter monsoon!” he thought closing the window against the gusts of wind. He turned away from the dark night and sat down next to the fireplace. He took another sip of the old cognac that his friend Henri de Vieusac, former French Ambassador to India, had given him.

“Seven months already, sacré Henri, à ta santé!” Archibald Wiscott said aloud as he poured himself a second glass. “Vive la France and the incredible story you told me!”

Was Henri’s tale - courtesy of an old friendship and a few brandies too many - really substantial? The implications were simply beyond his imagination. But then on the other hand that was exactly what he liked about the whole thing:

“Out of the ordinary. And God knows, a little bit of excitement won’t hurt in this dull life. Makes me feel younger.”

As they had so often these last few years, his thoughts wandered to the time when Ootacamund, his beloved Ooti, was still the uncrowned capital of South India, the place where the whole wealthy colonial crowd would gather during the hot months of the dry season. What a varied and carefree life it had been! A lover of Indian history and traditions Archibald Wiscott had of course known that the English supremacy could not last. Too often his Indian friends had warned him about the rising nationalist undercurrents. The lack of insight of the colonial power had favored the movements claiming independence from the British Crown. It came as no surprise to Archibald when in the years after World War Two the Indian Nation became a member of the international scene in its own right. His love for the country had made him stay when anyone even remotely British had left. It was then that his career as a rather lonely tea planter had started.

“But what the hell,” he shook himself out of the nostalgic dreams, “I wouldn’t have wanted to live in cold and rainy England anyway.”

He got up from his wicker-chair and strolled back to the rain beaten window overlooking the dark valley below. The visitor he expected was not in sight yet.

\* \* \*

Hardly ten yards away somebody else surveyed the small road leading up to the tea-estate of “Old Whisky” as the local people affectionately called Archibald Wiscott. Ajit Singh in his hiding place at the machine park nervously crushed a cigarette under his foot.

It was his first important field assignment as an Officer in the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of India. It was also a personal story in that his brother in law, a servant to Wiscott, had passed on to him the information about the talks between the tea planter and the former Ambassador. Should this turn out to be a hoax, he and his family would lose a lot of face. Ajit Singh had bypassed his superior in Bangalore by informing headquarters directly about the exchange between Wiscott and the French Ambassador. Delhi had reacted on the spot. He had been ordered to apply to Wiscott for a job as clerk in the tea estate. The people in Delhi hoped that by being close to the tea planter, he might learn more about the mysterious document that Henri de Vieusac had spoken about.

“If only this English nephew of Wiscott’s turns up and I can find out something from their conversation. If not I’m in for polishing the shoes of my boss for the rest of my life,” he grumbled.

\* \* \*

“Bloody donkey”, Timothy Wiscott muttered between clenched teeth as he jumped up and down in the old Mahindra Jeep rented in Bangalore, where he had arrived on the Indian Airline’s afternoon flight.

His spirits were low as he negotiated every bend of the hellish mountain road up to his grand uncle’s tea estate. What an uncle! For thirty years, the family had had no news from him. And now, all of a sudden, he was crying for help in a rather nebulous affair. He vividly recalled his surprise at the telephone call of his other grand uncle, Rudyard Wiscott, two weeks ago:

“Hello Timothy,” his uncle had exclaimed. “Awfully sorry to disturb you in your hard work. I know you young chaps are terribly busy cleaning up the mess we left you.”

“What else is new, Kipling?” Timothy had thought. Cheerfully he had replied: “Awfully glad to get some historical guidance from you.”

“Hmm, glad to realize that our young generation is as sharp as ever. It’s been a long time since we last met. I thought it would be nice to have you for a drink at Brandon House. How about next Saturday?”

“Oh, that’s very nice of you. I would be delighted to come. What time?”

“Shall we say at five?”

“Perfect, I’m looking forward to seeing you.”

“Very well then! Good-bye, Timothy.”

A sharp slippery bend of the road leading to the tea-estate brought Timothy back to the Indian reality. He had to watch his way carefully if he wanted to get to his uncle Archibald’s place in one piece. And yet he couldn’t keep his thoughts from wandering back to the meeting with his uncle Rudyard at Brandon House.

\* \* \*

### **Brandon House, Sussex**

Timothy Wiscott contently listened to the soft purring of his eight cylinder Triumph, a rare model he had purchased a few years ago, when a good car still improved its owner’s sex appeal. The small country road followed the windings of the soft valleys covered with forests and pasture fields. Centuries-old trees lined the way, casting shadows and admitting the light

of a low autumn sun on the car's windshield in a rapid succession of black and golden flashes. Small villages flew by, hardly imprinting themselves in the memory of Timothy who couldn't stop wondering about the invitation to the house of his uncle Rudyard. It was out of the ordinary for the old fox to invite him on such short notice with no reason given.

Kipling, as he called him secretly, avoided the rest of the clan. Timothy was probably the only member of the family with whom he kept regularly in contact. It was thanks to Uncle Rudyard's connections that he had been able to join the prestigious Diplomatic Services of the Foreign Office. Timothy liked to think of himself as of a bright young government servant with a promising future in his Ministry. Degrees in Economics and Chinese History along with his family background were strong assets.

He came out of his thoughts when on the top of a slight elevation of the road, he spotted the intersection leading to his uncle's estate. The house of the gatekeeper was difficult to make out from the main road. Heavy ivy twines concealed it against the green forest-line boarding the little road leading to Brandon House.

Hardly slowing down Timothy drove into the twisting road leading up to the manor of his uncle. Passing the luxurious stables on his left, he took the last curve at fair speed emerging on the forecourt of the house. He slammed on his brakes as he nearly bumped into a parked Bentley hidden by the bushes that lined the road all the way up to the square.

"Oh for heaven's sake, not into this car! What on earth is the Foreign Secretary doing here? How come my uncle invites me at the same time as my boss?"

Timothy had hardly parked his car at a safe distance from the Secretary's car, when the imposing figure of Rudyard Wiscott appeared in the doorway limping down the steps to meet him. They shook hands.

"Welcome Timothy," the old gentleman said warmly. "Glad your driving skills prevented you from kicking the quarterdeck of a respected Admiral of Her Majesty's Navy," he jocularly added. "Come in! Our guest is anxious to meet a brilliant young specimen of his staff and to see what a good oar you're pulling in his galley. I might just add that you... being a few years younger... well I would suggest you keep a low profile, if you know what I mean."

"Not quite, I must say, dear Uncle", Timothy replied sourly. "Your information regarding this afternoon's invitation was somewhat sketchy, I guess."

"Don't worry! I will do the talking. I will explain every thing to His Excellency and to you. Come on cheer up! Let's go to the library."

Here it was again: the "Old Boys" connection at work. Timothy couldn't suppress a feeling of envy. Summon a cabinet member to his house did not seem to pose any problem to his uncle. In the dark-paneled entrance hall, Timothy shot a quick glance into the huge mirror hanging next to the open oak staircase leading to the first floor. The reflection of a lean young man, smartly dressed in a sober dark grey two piece suit, green eyes behind gold rimmed glasses and a voluntary chin hidden behind a well trimmed blond beard restored some of his good humor. As the two men emerged into the light of the first floor, Timothy studied the venerable oil paintings hanging between huge windows. Generation after generation of gravely looking ancestors scrutinized their descendants.

An uninterrupted chain of power, Timothy realized, into which he might or might not be welded one day. The circles he moved in were probably the same as his uncle's, except for age. Circles within circles, where age brought you closer to the center of power and further away from personal freedom - the ultimate price to pay.

Rudyard Wiscott led his nephew towards the library at the end of the gallery. On entering the room, a smell of tobacco, burning wood and old leather reminded Timothy of the many Christmas Eves the family had spent at Brandon House when he was still a child. These

memories slightly eased the tension he felt at the sight of the distinguished gentleman seated next to the fireplace. Grey eyes under bushy white eyebrows examined him coolly.

“My dear Adam, may I introduce you to my nephew Timothy”, Sir Wiscott jovially called out crossing the room. The faintest smile played around the thin lips of the Foreign Secretary as he addressed Timothy:

“Young fellow, do you have a finger in the pie? If so, you might soon be foreign to my office.”

“Dear Adam,” cut in Sir Wiscott, “you should know by now your intrigue-happy Rudyard. How can you imagine my nephew, a product of modern and sober education, indulging in such romantic stuff as a secret meeting with a Cabinet Member? Don’t worry, Timothy! I will take the whole blame on myself, should this turn out to be a hoax. If it’s not, I will of course be glad to...”

“Oh come on Rudy, at your age, how could you possibly stand the weight of another ribbon on your chest.”

“Well, it still holds enough breath to blow away the bilge of any admiral.”

“I bet it does.”

“Okay gentlemen,” Rudyard sighed, lowering himself into a chair opposite the Foreign Secretary, “Sit down Timothy! Would you care for a whisky?”

He reached for a bottle of old malt and poured his nephew a generous drink. He resumed:

“Let me be more specific. I went through the trouble of calling you here, because of a very curious and potentially explosive story I came across recently. Believe me, it took several weeks for me to make up my mind whether to talk to you! It sounded utterly crazy. The first thing I did was to crosscheck the information with our National Library and with a few personal sources. Even so, I fully realize that I am putting my reputation with our government in jeopardy. But then it might only happen once in a lifetime that you really are part of history, as an actor.”

Amused interest showing on his face, the Foreign Secretary elaborately lit his pipe. Blowing out fragrant smoke through his thin nose he comfortably leaned back in his chair and prompted:

“I feel that we are going to spend a pleasant afternoon with an exciting story to listen to.”

“I hope you will, my dear friend,” Rudyard replied. “Both of you have heard about my cousin Archibald Wiscott. He is the tea planter who stayed in South India when everybody left head over heels. Three month ago I got a letter from him. The first in twenty-five years, mind you! But what he had to say in this letter made up for all those he hadn’t written. At the beginning of this year his old friend, le Comte Henri de Vieusac, had come to visit him on his tour d’adieu as French Ambassador to Delhi. You must have heard of Vieusac, didn’t you, Adam?”

“I think so. Very much “vieux France”. He was First Secretary in London in the late sixties.”

“Must be him”, nodded Rudyard. “Let me tell you what my cousin wrote to me. One evening Henri told Archibald about his passion for Tibetan history that he had developed during his stay in India. This was due to the enthusiasm for Buddhism on the part of his young wife. They had visited Dharamsala several times and even met the Dalai Lama on one of these occasions. Vieusac was deeply impressed by his open-mindedness. While visiting Dalhousie, where several monks had started a Tantric school, the Ambassador and his wife were approached by an old Lama who invited them to visit the temple’s library. Hundreds of old manuscripts neatly wrapped in yellow silk were stacked there. With incredible care the monk opened up a few of these age-old parchments. “These scriptures contain many deep messages”, the old Lama explained to the ambassador. “The meanings of some of them are hidden today, even to the most educated of our disciples. We have preserved them through

the centuries although we ignore their use. But is there such a thing as a useless object under the sun? You in the West, you have eyes, which maybe can see. At the beginning of this century, while still in Lhasa, we showed these scriptures to a British expedition. But their eyes were closed. We now try again because time is running out. On the highest order, I have prepared an old fragment of text for you. Its meaning is not understood by us. It is believed that its source might be Milarepa, the Tibetan Saint himself. Please study it and act accordingly.” With that the priest withdrew. Vieusac and his wife were left alone to marvel about the things they had heard. Back in Delhi, Henri de Vieusac discussed the matter with the Attaché Culturel of the embassy. It was decided to forward the document to the “Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales” in Paris. The specialists in Paris believed that the text could well have been written in Milarepa’s epoch. At the end of the transcription was an electrifying passage mentioning the presence - I now quote from my cousin’s letter – of beings you cannot see, whose eyes do not see you but know you, whose minds are so huge that they understand the sun and the stars and talk to them. The Institute in Paris did not elaborate on the meaning of this passage. Vieusac however was absolutely thrilled by it. When he met his old friend, the tea-planter, he simply could not keep the news to himself.”

Rudyard Wiscott leaned back in his chair and stared into the fire. The other men hadn’t moved during the whole story.

Finally the Foreign Secretary broke the silence:

“The tale is marvelous and of course very much appeals to my romantic soul, just as it did to yours. But I don’t really understand what you are driving at, Rudyard. Moreover I would like to point out that what you have told us so far is just a fairy tale.”

“Of course. I just wanted to get you into the mood. I told you, I did my crosschecking and so did my dear cousin. There is a big Tibetan settlement in South India near Mysore. That’s where Archibald started his inquiries. For weeks he didn’t come up with much. People in the settlement were mainly concerned with their survival in difficult surroundings. They didn’t bother about mysterious old documents. Two month later an old Tibetan man contacted him. This man, a former Lama in the Potala, the Residence of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, asked my cousin about a second document. According to the man it was the more important piece of the two. To the Tibetan’s disappointment however, my cousin couldn’t answer these questions, since Vieusac had only spoken of one document. The Lama mumbled something about a monastery in a place called Tang. When my cousin tried to get more information from him, the old man left abruptly, never to be seen again. This strange and very impolite behavior of the Tibetan monk roused suspicions in my cousin. The fact, that from two independent sources he was fed possibly the same story, convinced my cousin Archibald that there might be something to it.”

“So far so good,” cut in the Secretary, “just how reliable is your cousin? With all due respect for your family, we all know that India can do strange things to people. Many of our boys couldn’t take it and got into alcohol or other readily available drugs. The country can make you quite mystical at some time in your life.”

“I accept your objections entirely. I haven’t met my cousin for years. Yet his letter looks perfectly sound. The handwriting seems okay. Wouldn’t you say so?” he said as he handed the correspondence to the Secretary.

“It does look like a sound man’s writing. Still the story lacks hard facts. Certainly you’ve got a few more aces up your sleeve, or you wouldn’t be the old friend I know.”

“I don’t know whether they are aces, but they seem good cards to me anyway,” Rudyard Wiscott said getting up from his chair to put a new log in the fire. Pacing back and forth with his hands clasped in his back he resumed: “The first thing I did was to contact my friends at Defense. I remembered that a British mission went to Lhasa at the beginning of this century. It was confirmed and I could get access to the documents of the mission, dating from 1904.

All classified, God knows why! The diary of the British Commissioner Colonel Francis Edward Younghusband was certainly the most interesting part. Therein he writes about ancient texts they were shown by the Abbot of the Potala. Some of them didn't make sense to him despite the explanations of the Head Lama. He discarded the stories about people without eyes who can talk to the stars as being a product of fantasy often encountered in folk tales."

The crackling of the fire was the only sound in the library after Rudyard had sat down. The three men weighed the consequences of the story if proof of its truth could be provided. Timothy felt excitement as he realized that his boss seemed to be catching on to the story.

"So it seemed that I had the first hint that my cousin's tale held some truth," Rudyard continued. "There was another fact I tried to figure out. You remember that the old Tibetan had asked Archibald about a second document. He had also brought up a monastery by the name of Tang. I therefore studied a detailed map of Tibet, looking for a place with this name. Starting out from Lhasa, since the Tibetan monk had worked in one of the monasteries of the Potala, I scanned the area around the capital. But it looked like a dead end, since no such place was mentioned on my map. All of a sudden I had an idea: This document was last located in Lhasa. It didn't seem to be in Dalhousie or Dharamsala, otherwise it would have been shown to Vieusac. Between Lhasa and the two places in India there is a link: It is the Dalai Lama's flight from Tibet when the Chinese People's Liberation Army invaded his country. So I went to the National Library and found out the following: the Dalai Lama fled twice from Lhasa. The first time, in 1950, he took the road to Gyantse and down into the Tshumbi valley. There is a mountain pass called Tang-La. But could it be that he left some documents there, since he returned to Lhasa in 1951? It didn't seem likely. I then explored his second and definitive escape from Tibet. In 1959, at the end of March, he crossed the Himalayan range at Lhuntse Dzong, close to the eastern border of Bhutan, reaching Tawang and finally Tezpur in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh on the 31<sup>st</sup>. And yet the most direct way from Lhasa to India is more to the west leading through a valley located in the center of Bhutan or Drukyl, as the Bhutanese call their country. This valley is called Tang! Now put yourself in the Dalai Lama's situation for a moment. He doesn't know how well he will be received in India. What will his status be? What are they going to do with all his belongings? What better place to hide a few very valuable items than Bhutan, whose culture and religion are close to his own? For political reasons it was impossible for him to travel through their territory. He might have provoked an invasion by the Chinese Army of the land of his religious brothers. But other people could go there and they did! A few days before he left Lhasa, another important religious leader, His Holiness Karmapa, head of the Karma-Kukupa school, had left Lhasa and had traveled to Skim via this Tang valley in Bhutan!"

"Well Rudyard," the Foreign Secretary grumbled, "you certainly did your homework. What do you think, Timothy?"

"Sir, with your permission, I think it would be advisable for me to go to India as quickly as possible to find out about my uncle and his story."

"Hm, how impatient these young people are. But I agree. What about you, Rudyard? Do I have to ask?"

"Not really, dear Adam," Rudyard grinned lifting his glass, "Let's drink to the success of our crazy story."

It took them the whole evening to work out the details of Timothy's mission. By midnight Rudyard Wiscott accompanied his two guests to the door and wished them a safe return to London.

\* \* \*

# Paris

As usual the city was hot and empty of its native population. August was a terrible time to be in office. The only blessing was the air-conditioned office that went with his rank. The Chef de Cabinet sighed as he looked at the pile of folders on his desk still awaiting him. The top one was voluminous with a title that felt like a headache: “Rapport final d’activité et recommandations de l’Ambassadeur de France aux Indes, Comte Henri de Vieusac.”

What in heaven could the old aristocrat recommend to the government? Unfortunately such a report could not be taken lightly since India was a powerful nation.

It took two hours to get through the political part with the economic imbroglio to make the reading even more tedious. By noon, the Head of the Cabinet had completed the reading of the official part and came to the chapter called “addendum: A few personal thoughts and experiences.” This could either be the most fascinating or the most boring part of such a report. It all depended on the author.

“Better get it over with at once,” the Secretary thought and turned the page to a journey he certainly did not expect. At two o’clock he still hadn’t had his lunch. He plunged straight away into the report of the “Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales” which was attached to the main report. Somewhat sobered by its dry scientific language, he put the report down on his desk. No mystical interpretations were given about people without eyes who could speak to the stars.

“And if this document contains more than just a folktale?” he asked himself. “The implications for everybody on this planet would be absolutely shattering. What a coup for France, if our government announced this discovery! Moreover it might help my career to be the first in government to know about the existence of these documents.”

Suddenly a terrible thought occurred to him. What if the whole thing was a hoax? He would be the laughing stock of “tout Paris”. On the other hand, sitting on the information, if it was genuine, might do him no good either.

After some consideration the Secretary decided to start with the part that was right there in Paris. The specialists of the Institute could give him the necessary scientific back up to either go on or to simply forget about the whole thing. He was a cautious man. In delicate matters he preferred to have somebody else bear the responsibility if things went wrong. That’s how one lasted longest in politics.

He picked up the phone and ordered his secretary to call the “Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales”: “Get the head of the Department of Tibetology and ask him to come to my office at once!”

Hardly an hour later, an elderly, slightly ruffled man was ushered into his office. His skinny face, red from anger and physical exertion, emphasized the piercing look of his brown eyes. Little pearls of perspiration forming on his nearly bald head were prevented by bushy grey eyebrows from sliding on to the steel-rimmed, round glasses balancing precariously on a prominent, sharp nose. Before the visitor could voice his complaints the Secretary greeted him jovially:

“Mes excuses, Professeur Machprot! I really hate to disturb you in your work. Problems of the greatest importance have come up. The government needs advice from our best specialist in the field of Tibetology on a highly sensitive matter.”

The Professor, mollified by the flattering remarks, let himself be led to a chair. He sat down facing the high-ranking government official. Of course he didn’t realize that the little black statue, a hand sculptured by Rodin, standing right in front of him was wired with a powerful microphone.

“Monsieur le Secrétaire”, he sighed. “I’ve somehow expected this summons for weeks.”

“Have you really?” the Secretary replied in a neutral voice.

“I suppose,” the Professor said, “that the report of the Comte de Vieusac has finally come to your attention. I am surprised however that it took so long.”

The Chef de Cabinet leaned forward and probed cautiously: “I do not quite understand the meaning of this remark.”

The Professor shifted uneasily in his chair and stuttered:

“Please do not misunderstand me. There was no offense meant. In the Institute we were quite upset by the documents of the former Ambassador. We expected an immediate reaction from government side . . .”

“You said we at the Institute,” the Secretary interrupted, “Who else, besides yourself, analyzed the manuscript?”

“My personal assistant, Mademoiselle Adèle de Sainte Fleure, helped me translate it.”

“Was anybody else involved?”

“We quickly understood that the document was dynamite. So we kept it pretty much to ourselves.”

“Pretty much...?”

“Well, just one other person was involved. He is from Rome, a disciple of Professor Tucci, one of the most respected scholars of international rank in our field. He happened to visit our Institute at the time we had nearly finished the translation. We felt it was a unique occasion to discuss the accuracy of our work and to ask him about his interpretation. He promised us to keep the secret.”

“Mon cher Professeur, I hope he is the trustworthy person you believe he is,” the Secretary answered with a sigh, “A pity you didn’t contact us right away.”

“Would you have believed me?” Virgil Machprot replied.

“A difficult question indeed, mon ami,” the Chef de Cabinet said, “You were right, it is because of this Tibetan document that I called you here. To be perfectly frank, we need your advice as a specialist in this field, before we can decide how to react.”

“Monsieur le Secrétaire,” the Professor said, “from what I am going to explain now, you will easily understand our hesitation to disclose the findings. The text, by its content, is amazing. You are maybe aware of the incredibly rich world of sagas in the area of the Himalayas. In old Tibetan texts, historical facts are often difficult to discriminate from myth. The monk who gave it to ambassador Vieusac ascribed the document we are speaking of to the Tibetan Saint Milarepa. The life story of Milarepa, as we know it today, is an inextricable conglomerate of truth and fiction. In view of this, the only way to probe the veracity of the document was to look out for cross-references. That’s what we did.”

“You mean other documents of that period relate the same story?” the Secretary cut in.

“No such document is known at the Institute. But one of my assistants, working in Katmandu, is in contact with Tibetan monks. Through our “Attaché Culturel”, Jean Dupont, I asked him to inquire discreetly with the Tibetans about the document. For two months his inquiries yielded no results. One day a monk of the Nyingmapas, a school of Buddhism prevailing mostly in Bhutan, approached him. The Lama asked him about the reason of his search. My assistant gave him the necessary explanation. To his surprise the monk said, that such a search was completely useless since a manuscript of this kind simply did not exist. When my collaborator asked him, on what grounds he could make such a peremptory statement, the Bhutanese backed off, became quite evasive, and shortly thereafter ended the conversation in a surprisingly rude way. This roused suspicions with my assistant. Why did this monk contact our man only to persuade him that no such document exists? He could just as well have let him alone.”

“This is terribly weak evidence, mon ami,” the Secretary said, deception in his voice. “You very well understand that we can never take any kind of action with as little facts as this.”

“I fully agree with you. But let me continue. My associate and I discussed the matter with our colleague from Rome. He came up with two pieces of very disturbing information. His teacher, Professor Tucci, had visited Lhasa many times during the reign of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and he had been shown scriptures with hidden meanings of this kind.”

Professor Machprot let the importance of his statement sink in and resumed:

“Our friend has very close contacts to the Vatican. They often use his services in delicate religious discussions with Buddhist dignitaries. One of his contacts had informed him, that recently there had been some stir in the innermost circles of the Curia. A priest of the Company of Jesus had requested to see an old Chinese document in the Secret Archives of the Vatican. As you know this library contains more political secrets than all the archives of this world’s intelligence services.”

“What has this to do with our story?” the Chef de Cabinet asked puzzled.

“Well, it looks like the request was brusquely turned down by the highest authority.”

“You mean by the . . .?”

“Indeed, by the Pope himself, since this document is accessible to him alone.”

“I still don’t get your point. We were speaking of Tibetan manuscripts and you bring up a Chinese document.”

“Let me explain! This Chinese document dates from 1655. It is known as the “Silk Letter of the Ming Empress”. The priest who inquired about the document happens to be one of the most brilliant Tibetologists in the Roman Catholic Church. Two days after his request, he was transferred to Rwanda, into the middle of nowhere, cut off from all contact with the world!”

“Eh bien ça alors!” exclaimed the Secretary. “This is very intriguing indeed. I must ask you, Professeur, to keep this absolutely secret and to inform your associate to do so as well. It has become a matter of state this very moment!”

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## **Geneva - Beijing**

In seven years as Chief of Personnel for the United Nations in Geneva, Chou Hua had never seen anything like this. With great surprise he looked at the transfer-instruction that the General Secretary of UNDP had sent him this morning by urgent diplomatic courier from New York. It said that after a discussion with the British Ambassador he proposed the posting of Timothy Wiscott to Thimphu, Bhutan.

The job had been advertised, as usual, in the internal UN gazette. Five candidates had been considered as potentially fitting to the job-description. This Wiscott had not even been a candidate!

“Why did London lean on the Secretary General through their Ambassador?” Chou Hua wondered.

He put down the paper labeled urgent. Thoughtfully he looked out at the Lake of Geneva with the imposing Massif du Mont Blanc distinctly visible against the clear autumn sky. What peaceful scenery for this troubled international community! All the struggles he had witnessed here didn’t seem to affect the host country. It certainly didn’t disturb the peace of mind of the Swiss to pocket, year after year, a major part of the UN. As a Chinese, Chou Hua secretly admired the empirical mind of the Swiss people. Slowly his awareness circled back to the sheet of paper on his desk. Something was fishy about it. It was also clumsy. In London they knew, who handled transfers in Geneva. Did they try to fool him by being obvious? He loved the kind of game, because the layers of deceit your adversary was using could be of any number.

“The shown face teaches you the hidden face, since they are the same,” he reflected as he reached for the interoffice-phone. “Miss Wollner, bring me the file on Timothy Wiscott, English national?”

“I will go and get it for you,” the secretary said. Five minutes later she was back in his office with the file under her arm.

“Will you need my help for anything else?”

“Oh, what time is it?”

“It’s five thirty.”

“Already? I hadn’t realized it was that late. By all means, please, you may leave! I will close the office myself. I still have some urgent work to do, but I think I can manage without your help.”

“Thank you, have a nice evening!”

“Good bye.”

Alone in his office, Chou Hua went through the file of the Englishman. It looked like the man came from a wealthy family. Was he on some kind of occupational therapy working for the UN? Or was he a real professional? Did his origin explain, why the English Ambassador had personally intervened? His credentials, however, looked good. He held two degrees, one in Engineering, and the other in Oriental History. Chou Hua was puzzled by the fact that his specialization was not in Forestry since the job was in the Department of Forestry. His second degree didn’t help much to clarify the picture.

Chou leaned back and thought the delicate problem over. He needed advice from his own people. Since the answer was requested by the end of the week, he decided to make use of the facilities of his embassy. He got up from his desk, reached for his raincoat and let himself out of the office.

“To the embassy!” he told his driver. Traffic, as usual, was heavy at the Gare de Cornavin and on the Pont du Mont Blanc. He was happy to arrive at the quiet Chemin Surville, where the Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic had its headquarter. The TV cameras at the entrance picked up the car. Noiselessly the two heavy grey steel doors swung back. He hurriedly entered the austere house and asked the duty officer to request an urgent meeting with the Ambassador. Ten minutes later he was ushered into the office of the Head of Mission.

“Comrade,” he addressed his superior in terms of national hierarchy, “I came on the shortest way to this place to report to you an event whose significance is not yet certain, but which might turn out to be of great importance.”

“As you know,” the elder man smiled, “my door is always open to you. What has upset you to the point of personally asking my advice?”

What a subtle way to tell him that a little closer cooperation with the embassy would have been appreciated! It was true enough that Chou worked independently with the UN. He submitted only a minimal number of reports to the embassy. Therefore the other Chinese considered him an outsider.

“This afternoon I received an urgent message from the Secretary General of UNDP,” he answered. In a few words he related the event and his speculations to his superior. When he had finished, the Ambassador asked with a smile:

“What are your intentions now?”

“I need your help, Comrade,” Chou Hua replied, “Beijing should be informed as quickly as possible. They have to be involved in the decision.”

“Why go to all this trouble?” the elder man objected, “It only concerns the posting of a P2-employee. This man is probably using his good connections to do some years abroad in a pleasant and interesting country.”

“I thought so too. Yet, it does not fit in with the image I get from the man by reading his file. He comes from a wealthy and influential family. He could take it easy and live comfortably with the money he has inherited. And yet he invests in a very good training. He even gets two academic degrees. This just isn't the person to idle away his time. Furthermore his training is not at all in the field of Forestry.”

“Interesting indeed. An inconsistency - nothing more. Is it really enough evidence to risk an unscheduled radio-contact with Beijing? That's what you are asking me for, isn't it?” the Ambassador said.

“Indeed Comrade,” Chou Hua answered.

“I am sorry, Chou, but we have strict orders from our ministry to use the radio as little as possible.”

“When is your next transmission scheduled?” the younger man insisted.

“Not before the end of the month.”

“Seven days from now! That's too late! I have to clear this file in three days.”

“You have to come up with yet another argument to convince me,” the ambassador insisted.

“Wiscott's position in the Foreign Office is simply too good to go on a P2-job in a forlorn place in the Himalayas. To be quite frank I have a terrible gut feeling that something is cooking. It might very well blow right up in our faces. Bhutan, after all, is one of our southern neighbors! In this troubled area, it is the only country that remained stable and more or less peaceful these last fifty or more years. We wouldn't like it to change! I plead with you, what is the risk of a small reprimand for a useless, unscheduled transmission as compared to the loss of face, if we mess this up by being careless?”

“You really offload the responsibility on me,” the ambassador winced.

“I am asking for your help, that's all, Comrade.”

“Very well then. The facilities will be at your disposal tonight at nine forty-five. That's the time allotted to our embassy for emergency contacts. Please make a written report of no more than three pages. Have it typed by my own secretary! Our radio officer will process it and put it on the air at the given time.”

“I am very grateful, Comrade.”

Bowing slightly Chou Hua left the room.

\* \* \*

It didn't happen often that Geneva called outside its scheduled transmissions. Immediately the Duty Officer of the Foreign Ministry in Beijing opened the envelope with the message that had arrived at five forty-seven this morning. After a quick glance at the report he reached for the phone:

“Comrade Minister, this is your Duty Officer speaking. We just received an unscheduled transmission from our embassy in Geneva.”

Having read it to his Minister he anxiously waited for an answer. After a full minute of silence it came:

“Activate mole number one in Dharamsala! Tell him to go to Bhutan immediately! Brief him on the Englishman! He will know how to handle it. That's all for the time being.”

“Yes, Comrade Minister,” with a shaking hand he put down the receiver. The prospect of activating their deepest and most precious mole made his heart turn into ice. Something really big was brewing.

\* \* \*

**New Delhi**

“Gentlemen, we are presently facing a very serious situation,” the Head of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of India announced. “Our embassy in Bhutan informs us that UN in Geneva has filed a request with UNDP in Thimphu regarding Timothy Wiscott. He is to be cleared as an expatriate expert with the Government of Bhutan. As you all are aware, we have been monitoring this Englishman ever since he met his uncle in South India. The intentions of London are not clear at this time. It seems however that Wiscott is taking up his new job with the blessing of his minister. This puts us in a position, where we have to take action.”

None of the present high-ranking officials from Foreign Affairs and the Army dared to speak. In the oppressive heat the slowly rotating blades of the fan seemed to cut through viscous uneasiness. Wiping off beads of perspiration the representative of the Prime Minister’s Office said:

“I wish to point out clearly, that our government as such, cannot be involved in any way. We understand the importance of this affair and agree, that adequate action must be taken. I wish to remind you, that no unfriendly gesture against a neighboring country can be sanctioned from our side.”

“This is very well understood, Sir,” the General of the Secret Service acknowledged. “It will be an undercover mission. It will be impossible to trace it back to our government. Should anything go wrong, we will take the full blame. In exchange I want to request the fullest cooperation from the Army and the Ministry of Interior.”

“The Prime Minister has already issued instructions to that effect,” the representative said.

Relieved that the decision was not theirs anymore, the other officials nodded their agreement.

“Thank you for your confidence, gentlemen,” the General smiled. “I will personally supervise this operation. Only a minimal amount of people will be informed in order for security to remain very tight. You will certainly understand, that the details of my plan should not be discussed here. You have my word that the uttermost care will be taken to guarantee its success.”

\* \* \*

## **Thimphu**

Only one window was lit in the Royal Cottage. A shadow could be seen sliding over the drawn curtains as the Ruler of Bhutan paced to and fro in his room.

His youthful face looked drawn. The full lips moved silently. His slanted, coal black eyes darted from the letter on his desk to the portrait of his father, the late King of Bhutan. His lean body, slightly inclined under the weight of his office, did not fill his colorful Bakoo woven out of raw silk. Three weeks now, during which he had hardly been able to eat anything! Three weeks also since the message had arrived!

“Why did you accept this burden on our family, Father?” he sighed as he sat down behind his desk, facing a delicate little altar-table on which a small Buddha statue meditated smilingly. For the hundredth time, he took the letter and read it again. There was no doubt that it was genuine. The secret code was in it. The bearer too, had given the correct code as he had delivered the message.

The King’s thoughts wandered back to the day, when his father had taken him on a hunting trip. Far away from any indiscreet ears he had told him about the terrible secret, whose guardian he had become a few years ago. On the honor of the Bhutanese Crown, he had made him swear to be the dignified keeper of the Secret after his death.

Now the day had come where the promise of the Late King had to be fulfilled! The letter demanded it.

A weight crushing his chest nearly prevented him from reaching the telephone standing on his desk. Slowly he dialed the number and waited patiently till the other person answered. A sleepy voice grumbled incoherent words into the receiver.

“Wake up, my friend!” he said kindly waiting for the other man to come to his senses.

“My apologies, Your Majesty. I didn’t realize...”

“The hour is late, I know. Listen carefully now! I want you to go ahead with the initiation of the Plan Tiger.”

“The Plan Tiger... Your Majesty?”

“You heard me correctly. Start on the spot! Good night.”

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